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Source: *Israel Exploration Journal*, Vol. 43, No. 4 (1993), pp. 235-240
Published by: Israel Exploration Society
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/27926313
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A Judaean Contribution to Roman Decoration: An Ornamented Stone from the Temple Mount Reconsidered*

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IN A previous issue of *IEJ*, Ruth Jacoby took a different position from L.Y. Rahmani and other scholars before him concerning the identification of the original function of an ornamented stone (Fig. 1) in secondary use from the Temple Mount.[1] It seems to me quite probable that Jacoby's identification is correct. Both the running motif, lacking any central axiation and cut on its left side, and the ovolo crowning it, speak for its initial use as an architectural frieze, rather than a sarcophagus. I would suggest that it be attributed to the category of friezes crowning walls or door lintels and not those set up on regular orders of columns and architraves.[2] Recent research can further clarify the interpretation of this stone.

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* This paper is part of the author's larger research project concerning architectural decoration in Israel during the Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine periods. Its undertaking was made possible by the generosity of the Alexander-von-Humboldt Foundation and the Kurt Lion Foundation for Cooperation between the Universities of Tel Aviv and Constance, Germany. The present paper was written while on leave at the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Berlin, in July 1991. I am indebted to all these institutions, and mainly to Prof. Wolfgang Schuller, Constance, and Prof. Helmut Kyrieleis, Berlin, for their continuous support.

Thanks are due to Ruth Jacoby for granting permission to reproduce Fig. 1. Fig. 2 is courtesy of the British Museum; I am grateful to Dr. Susan Walker, British Museum, for her help in obtaining this reproduction. Fig. 3 is after Minns (below, n. 8), Fig. 74; I am grateful to Mrs. Judith Dekel, Tel Aviv University, for drawing this illustration. Fig. 4 is after Avigad (below, n. 12), Fig. 57. Fig. 5 is courtesy of the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Rome; I am grateful to Dr.-Ing. D. Mertens, Rome, for his help in obtaining this photograph.

1 The stone was published for the first time by Ch. Clermont-Ganneau: *Archaeological Researches in Palestine during the Years 1873–1874*, London, 1899, pp. 138–139. See also M. Avi-Yonah: Oriental Elements in the Art of Palestine in the Roman and Byzantine Period, *QDAP* 14 (1950), p. 61, Fig. 12; L.Y. Rahmani: Late Second Temple Coffins in Secondary Use, *Qadmoniot* 81–82 (1988), pp. 41–43 (Hebrew); Ruth Jacoby: The Ornamented Stone near the Fountain of Qatabay: A Sarcophagus or a Frieze? *IEJ* 39 (1989), pp. 284–286.

2 Such as in H. Kohl and C. Watzinger: *Antike Synagogen in Galilaea*, Leipzig, 1916, Figs. 55–64, 99–100. See also Jacqueline Dentzer-Feydy: Décor architectural et développement du Hauran du I^er^ siècle avant J.-C. au VII^e^ siècle après J.-C., in J.-M. Dentzer (ed.): *Hauran* I, 2, Paris, 1986, Pls. XIVa–b, XVI.

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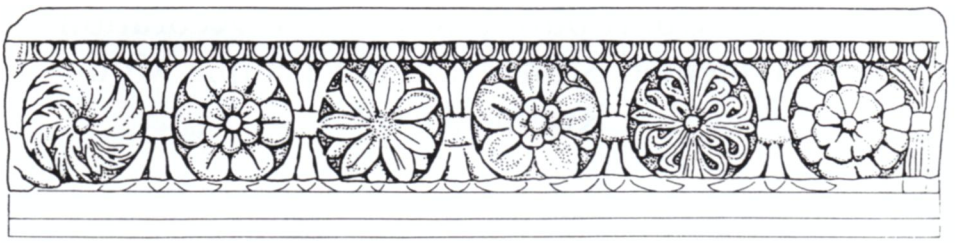

Fig. 1. Drawing of the ornamentation. 0 30 cm.

Its ornamental motif consists of six rosettes of various types separated by a recurring motif of three leaves tied in the middle by a riband. The motif itself, however, need not necessarily be considered 'a crucial clue for correct identification of the stone and its original function'.[3] Moreover, Jacoby's interpretation of the rosettes as 'comparable to metopes, separated by three leaves, reminiscent of triglyphs', thus following Avi-Yonah, is, in my opinion, inaccurate.[4] It is true that plain discs and stylized plant rosettes were used as decoration of architectural metopes and ossuaries, at least those carved with architectural ornament.[5] On the other hand, it would be necessary to distinguish between rosettes separated by triglyphs or by imitations of triglyphs and those separated by plant motifs.[6] Leaves tied in the middle by a riband cannot be related to triglyphs. Rather, they seem to have been the result of the stylization of palmettes or of lotus flowers, which occurred in plant scrolls and wreaths from the Greek Archaic period onwards.[7] In fourth-century B.C.E. painted pottery, the motif of rosettes separated by tied leaves is quite a common decoration (Fig. 2); at the same time, it also adorned Graeco–Scythian

3 Jacoby (above, n. 1), p. 285.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 286; Avi-Yonah (above, n. 1), p. 61.

5 Heterodox Doric friezes are quite usual in Hellenistic architecture, and consequently, the motif of rosettes and triglyphs is not necessarily 'a local Hellenistic version of the Doric frieze' (Jacoby [above, n. 1], p. 286), but seems to have been introduced to both Judaean and Nabataean architecture after it was created in Greece and western Asia Minor. See, e.g., Eleusis — H. Hoermann: *Die inneren Propyläen von Eleusis*, Berlin, 1932, p. 46, Pls. 6, 20, 42b; Samos (Pythagoreion) — H. Lauter: *Die Architektur des Hellenismus*, Darmstadt, 1986, p. 263, Pl. 40b. See also Judith McKenzie: *The Architecture of Petra*, Oxford, 1990, Pl. 40; and Rachel Hachlili: *Ancient Art and Archaeology in the Land of Israel*, Leiden, 1988, Figs. 6–8.

On the decoration of ossuaries, see P. Figueras: *Decorated Jewish Ossuaries*, Leiden, 1983, pp. 55–58, Pls. 4 (No. 566), 5 (No. 109), 12, 19 and 20.

6 See, e.g., the variety of separation motifs in ossuaries, *ibid.* Pls. 11–15.

7 As evident from pottery, see P. Jacobsthal: *Ornamente griechischer Vasen*, Berlin, 1927, pp. 51–52, Pls. 23–28. See A. Riegl: *Stilfragen* (2nd ed.), Berlin, 1923, pp. 195–197, Figs. 95–98.

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Fig. 2. The upper part of a volute-crater attributed to the Baltimore painter. British Museum, F 284: PS 250765.

jewellery (Fig. 3).[8] As a matter of fact, Avi-Yonah already had a feeling that the architectural impact on changes in Judaean decoration of the first century C.E. was overemphasized, in dealing with the stone reconsidered here. Accordingly, he added: 'All these [i.e. the ornamental row of rosettes] are strongly influenced by Hellenistic plant relief...'.[9] It would be of some interest to know, for example, how

Fig. 3. Part of a gold necklace from Ryzhanovka. After Minns (below, n. 8), Fig. 74.

8 E.g., A.D. Trendall and A. Cambitoglou: *The Red-Figured Vases of Apulia*, II, Oxford, 1982, Pls. 319, 321, 330. For the decoration on Graeco-Scythian jewellery, see E.H. Minns: *Scythians and Greeks*, Cambridge, 1913, pp. 179–180, Fig. 74 (fourth–third centuries B.C.E.).

9 Avi-Yonah (above, n. 1), pp. 61–62.

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the 'triglyphs' of a frieze on an ossuary from the 'Tombs of the Kings' (now in the Louvre) lost their 'tripartite' design and became merely knobs.[10] Both rosettes and plain discs (which, in fact, might represent rosettes *en bosse*) separated by plant motifs, tied leaves included, decorated ossuaries of this period.[11] Furthermore, on the corner pilasters of the Tomb of Absalom in the Kidron Valley, the motif of plain discs separated by tied leaves also occurs, strongly emphasized in this case (Fig. 4).[12] It is noteworthy that in Zacharia's Tomb, another monumental tomb in the Kidron Valley, plain discs are carved on a pilaster capital with no separating motif.[13]

The motif of rosettes separated by tied leaves was the object of a thorough study published a few years ago, attributing it to a long decorative evolution of Oriental design which started in the Neo-Assyrian kingdom, continued into the Achaemenid kingdom and which was taken over by the Greeks, who finally transmitted it to Hellenistic art.[14] One may presume that it reached Judaea at that time as well. It seems that in this case too, a Hellenized Oriental motif was adopted by the Jews, as happened in various fields of their artistic activity.[15] According to Pfrommer, this ornament was still used in Central Asia in the first century C.E. In

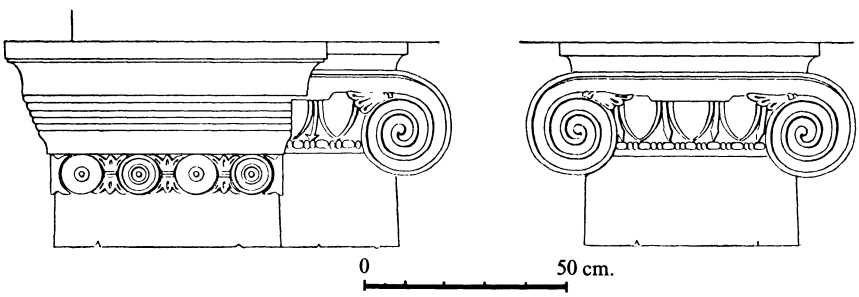

Fig. 4. Capital from the Tomb of Absalom. After Avigad (below, n. 12), Fig. 57.

10 Avi-Yonah (above, n. 1), Fig. 11. For an example, see a Greek vase of the fourth century B.C.E., Jacobsthal (above, n. 7), p. 204, Pl. 149a–b.

11 Figueras (above, n. 5), pp. 36–41, Pls. 13–14.

12 N. Avigad: *Ancient Monuments in the Kidron Valley*, Jerusalem, 1954, Figs. 54, 56 and 57 (Hebrew). For the dating of the monument to the first half of the first century C.E., see pp. 127–130.

13 *Ibid.*, Fig. 47.

14 M. Pfrommer: Ein orientalisches Motiv in der griechischen Schmuckkunst, *Istanbuler Mitteilungen* 36 (1986), pp. 59–76.

15 Avi-Yonah (above, n. 1), *passim*. See also Hachlili (above, n. 5), esp. pp. 366–369. Another example of the Levant occurs on a stele of third–second centuries B.C.E. at Umm el-'Amed; see M. Dunand and R. Duru: *Oumm el-'Amed, Une ville de l'époque hellénistique aux échelles de Tyr*, Paris, 1962, p. 145, Pl. 27, 1–3.

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another study, published by Köster,[16] the motif is noted at the Library of Celsus, at Ephesus, dated between 113 and 117 C.E.[17] Its occurrence in Asia Minor is attributed to influences from Italy, where it was used in the Arch of Titus at Rome and in that of Trajan at Beneventum. According to Köster, there are no precedents for this motif in architectural decoration between the Hellenistic period and the time the Arch of Titus was erected (*c.* 81 C.E.). It seems, however, that in both above-mentioned studies, the contribution of the Levant, Judaea included, was neglected.

The design of the ornamental motif of the stone from Jerusalem is extremely similar to that bordering the coffer vault of the Arch of Titus (Fig. 5).[18] Moreover, the scheme used here of two rosettes arranged inside a coffer is reminiscent of the design occurring on ossuaries.[19] We should be aware, however, of the differences in the

Fig. 5. The coffer vault of the Arch of Titus, Rome. Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Abteilung Rom, Neg. 79.2016.

16 R. Köster: Ein Kleinkunstmotiv an ungewohntem Ort, *Istanbuler Mitteilungen* 39 (1989), pp. 297–306.

17 W. Wieberg *et al.*: *Die Bibliothek* (*Forschungen in Ephesos* V 1), Vienna, 1944.

18 M. Pfanner: *Der Titusbogen,* Mainz, 1983, p. 32, Pls. 25–29, detail on Pl. 29:10 bI.

19 Figueras (above, n. 5), Pls. 14 (No. 218), 23.

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artistic design of the details: the Arch of Titus is known for its floral–naturalistic exuberance as an outstanding representative of Flavian 'baroque'.[20] The Jerusalem stone reveals the tendency of art from the end of the Second Period towards stylization, even rigidity, and *horror vacui*.[21]

It is generally known that the Arch of Titus was erected as a monument of Roman victory after the destruction of the Temple and of Jerusalem.[22] Within this historical context, it may be that the use of the ornamental motif of rosettes separated by tied leaves at the Arch of Titus could be attributed to the impact of Judaean art on Roman decoration of the last decades of the first century C.E. This suggestion is in contrast with the strong influence of Roman art during the first century B.C.E. and the first century C.E., as seen, for example, in the crystallisation of the regular Corinthian capital,[23] the use of certain styles of stucco and wall painting and the occurrence of *opus reticulatum* and *opus sectile*.[24]

In conclusion, rosettes separated by tied leaves represent a Hellenized Oriental plant motif — used by Jews in decorating their monuments, tombs and ossuaries during the Second Temple period — and not an adaptation of Doric friezes. In addition, the motif discussed here could be considered a link in the evolution of the ornament prior to the time when the Arch of Titus was erected. Moreover, in the historical context of the interchange and conflict with the Romans, the Judaean use of this ornament may have had its impact on Roman artisans as well.

20 P.H. von Blanckenhagen: *Flavische Architektur und ihre Dekoration, Untersucht am Nervaforum*, Berlin, 1940, *passim*. See also C.F. Leon: *Die Bauornamentik des Trajansforums und ihre Stellung in der früh- und mittelkaiserzeitlichen Architekturdekoration Roms*, Vienna, 1971, pp. 87–141.

21 Hachlili (above, n. 5), p. 65, e.g. Fig. 7.

22 E. Schürer: *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C. — AD135)*, I, rev. ed., Edinburgh, 1973.

23 M.L. Fischer: *Das korinthische Kapitell im Alten Israel in der hellenistischen und römischen Periode*, Mainz, 1990, pp. 18–19.

24 In general, E. Netzer: *An Architectural and Archaeological Analysis of Building in the Herodian Period at Herodium and Jericho* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem), Jerusalem, 1977 (Hebrew).

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